XIX. *Extract of a Letter from* Edward Hasted, *Esq; F. R. S. and F. S. A. to Dr.* Ducarel, *concerning Chesnut Trees.*

Dear Sir,

Read March 8, 1771. IN answer to Mr. B's 1st rule—I must remark, instances are exceeding frequent of woods and coppices breaking off, by a sudden change, to other trees, and that where the situation and strata are entirely the same; sometimes without any mark of division, and sometimes with a ditch only, an old stub for a boundary, or perhaps distinguished only by the difference in the growth of the underwood, or the like. It is a known fact, that particular sorts of trees have grown in large tracts and masses in a country, which have been in succeeding times almost extirpated from thence, either from others being more diligently encouraged and preserved, or from the present destructive method of too frequent cutting them down; and only scattered stubs or trees have remained of the sort, thinly dispersed in woods and hedges. The wich, elm, maple, and others, are indigenous trees; and yet seldom, if ever, grow in large masses, or cover considerable tracts of ground; the reason of

The Royal Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve, and extend access to *Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775).* www.jstor.org

which is, they never ſhoot from the ſtool ſo as to make any conſiderable progreſs.

As to the 2d—A tree, or particular wood, may grow very kindly in a coppice, and yet in proceſs of time, by the continual felling of the wood, may be entirely worn out, when other ſorts, which bear the woodman's cutting-bill more kindly, will increaſe, and overrun the former, ſo as to fill every vacancy made by it. Beſides, there are ſome kinds of wood which are poiſoned, and in time decay by the near affinity of others. The aſh is a particular inſtance of this poiſonous quality towards other trees.

As to the 3d rule of ſeeds ripening kindly; I muſt diſagree in this too, as I find very few, if any, whether indigenous or not, whoſe ſeeds do not ripen here ſufficient to continue the tree eaſily; and where it is not in profuſion, the indigenous tree will be found as deficient as ſome others, which are known to be otherwiſe.

Mr. B's laſt rule, of places taking their name from indigenous trees which grow there, may ſerve as well to prove all trees whatſoever ſo: there being but few trees which have grown in Britain, but our very ingenious etymologiſts have derived the names of ſome places from them.—Singular inſtances, I own, I do not recollect.

All kinds of things in general adopt the name of that country where they grow, or are made in the greateſt perfection.—Inſtances of this are obvious in every neceſſary of life. The cheſnut, whoſe fruit ripens in Spain in much more perfection than in this variable and colder climate, has gained the additional name of Spaniſh to it, among the merchants

and venders of them, though in the country villages the woodmen will yet talk of the growth of this right ENGLISH CHESNUT. And as to Pliny's telling us that cheſnuts were brought from Sardis to Italy long before his time; that does not make it leſs probable that they might have been the growth of Britain, at the very time they were brought from thence to Rome.

The ancient Norman buildings are moſtly of this wood, which in all probability was fetched from this country; moſt of the ſtone wherewith our monaſteries and buildings of ſuch ſort were erected came from Normandy. This ſeems to have been a mutual traffick for ſome centuries between the two countries.

How the notion aroſe firſt, that the foreſt mentioned by Fitz-Stevens to the Northward of London, was moſtly of cheſnut, I do not know, nor could I ever find any authority for it; though it continues the aſſertion of moſt literary men. If I might conjecture, I ſhould think it to have ariſen from a blunder and miſtake of the name of Norwood; there being many decayed ſtubbs of cheſnuts in the archbiſhop of Canterbury's Norwood, not far from London; which is, no doubt, the place Mr. Miller means, when he mentions ſuch having been ſeen in the neighbourhood of the metropolis.

Moſt antiquarians aſſert that Old London was built of cheſnut: that this tree grew near London, has been proved above from Norwood, and may from the name of Cheſhunt, in Hertfordſhire; that it may have done ſo in former times in great plenty, might be ſuppoſed from what I have ſaid before; but one

reaſon of its decay may be aſſigned to the great increaſe of the metropolis, which conſumed moſt of the cheſnut timber near it; and the ſtubbs of ſuch being much ſubject to decay, few, if any of them, could naturally laſt to this time, ſo as to bring any profit to the owner, but have been grubbed up from time to time, till they are now almoſt totally eradicated; and I think, there is great probability that the univerſal decay and deſtruction of this kind of timber, throughout the realm, appeared in ſo ſerious a light to the legiſlature, as to give the firſt riſe for our laws for the preſervation of timber in general.

Oak timber is ſo entirely different from cheſnut, in the rings and ſpaces, which appear when cut tranſverſely, that it is impoſſible to miſtake the one from the other.

In a note, p. 96. of the Anglo-Norman antiquities, mention is made, of a large tract of cheſnut woods, near Sittingbourne, in Kent (and in the North Weſt part of Eaſt Kent, as it ſhould be printed), which is certainly right; theſe woods are a very large tract, which more or leſs have cheſnut ſtubbs ſpread over the whole ſpace of them. They extend ſome miles, from the environs of the town of Milton, by the old highway (now diſuſed), leading from thence to Maidſtone. The general name of the whole tract, is Cheſnut or Cheſtney Woods. The 40 acres mentioned in the ſaid note to have been grubbed up, were only felled; and were of ſuch a ſize and growth, as to be moſtly uſed as timber. On the top of Cheſnut Hill between Newington and Sittingbourne, there ſtood a cheſnut tree of prodigious ſize, which has been felled within theſe few

years, the ſtool of which may now be ſeen cloſe to the high road.

The production of nature in this vaſt tract of woods is ſo plain, that it would be abſurd to uſe arguments to defend it; nor ſhall I bring examples of it from other countries, which might be had: I ſhall only take notice, with Dr. Ducarel, that in the ancient foreſts of Kent, which lay to the ſouth of it, adjoining to Suſſex and Surry, there remain large old cheſnut ſtubs or brocks, now almoſt worn out, and periſhed, which are left by the woodmen as termini or boundaries, either of pariſhes or of private property; which is the univerſal cuſtom every where made uſe of to diſtinguiſh the wood of different owners, and are never cut down or altered; ſo that they muſt have ſtood ſacred to this uſe, from the firſt introduction of private property into this iſland; and were no doubt even then of conſiderable age, by their being made choice of for this uſe, in preference to any others.

But to return to the neighbourhood of Milton.—The manor of Norwood, within that pariſh, is called, in the higheſt records we are acquainted with, Norwood-Cheſtney, Chaſtney, and Caſtney, no doubt from the great plenty of cheſnut within its bounds, even in thoſe early times. Nor is this a ſingular inſtance of any place in England being named from the cheſnut tree; Cheſhunt, in Suffolk; and Cheſhunt, in Hertfordſhire, having both their names from the plenty of cheſnuts near them: the laſt of theſe places, Chancy tells us, ſeems in old time to have abounded with them; and that moſt of the ancient houſes in that vill were built of them; and in the venerable

nerable book of Doomſday, we have an account of a quantityof woodland in this pariſh, ſufficient for the feeding of 1200 hogs, which ſhews us that this conſiderable tract of wood was of ſuch ſort, as to afford plenty of good food for ſwine; as it certainly muſt be to afford pannage for ſo large a number; and that theſe woods were cheſnuts, may in all probability be preſumed from the above circumſtances.

The ſame venerable record likewiſe mentions the village of Box, alias Boxbury, in Hertfordſhire; which, the learned Serjeant tells us, was ſo called from a large wood, which retains the name to this day; and I have now before me the names of more than a dozen pariſhes and places, which have taken their names from the box tree, and retain it to this time. The fir, no doubt, from every evidence that can be had of former times, and by the evidence of our own eyes, from the numbers of them which have been dug up in almoſt every part of Britain, was an indigenous tree of this county; notwithſtanding Cæſar's aſſertion to the contrary, who appears to have been but little acquainted with it, when he tells us, "this iſland had every kind of "tree the ſame as Gaul, except the fir and the "beech;" both of which were in the greateſt plenty here at that very time; the latter was particularly ſo within the county of Kent, the only ſpot he might be ſaid to be acquainted with: and yet, after this, no one ſure will aſſert that either of theſe trees are not indigenous; though the former of them is entirely extirpated (as the production of nature) from the Southern part of Britain, which the cheſnut is not; though it is made uſe of as an argument againſt its

its being the natural product of this country. The elm bears every mark of its being indigenous; and, according to one of Mr. B's general rules, it muſt be ſo, for there are near 40 places in England, which take their name from this tree, moſt of which are mentioned in the book of Doomſday.

Whoever has been much acquainted with the woods and tracts of ground lying on our Chalky Hills, will ſurely never contend that the yew is not the indigenous growth of this country. I am,

Dear SIR,

Yours, &c.

Huntingfield, in Kent,
Nov. 29, 1770.

Edw. Haſted.